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CIA CASEY
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--- CIA Director William Casey said legislation requiring future agency heads to be career intelligence officers would needlessly tie the president's hands.

Casey, who was chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission in the Nixon administration and President Reagan's campaign manager before being appointed to head the CIA in 1981, said the president has the right to appoint whomever he wants.

"I don't think you tie the president's hands like that," Casey told the Los Angeles World Affairs Council Thursday night. "He has the right and prerogative to appoint whoever he thinks will do the best job."

The bill was introduced in the Senate Thursday.

Casey also ducked a question about the growing controversy over a suggestion by President Reagan that previous administrations' reductions in American intelligence capability left the country's diplomats vulnerable to recent suicide attacks by terrorists.

"As the director of Central Intelligence I try to do everything I can to stay out of controversy," Casey said. "I'm going to pass on that one."

Casey's speech, entitled "The Role of Intelligence in Foreign Policy," focused on the Soviet Union.

He said even if the current "aging" Soviet leadership is replaced by younger leaders, he is not optimistic about a thaw in relations.

"The need to maintain control doesn't give them many options," he said of the Russian leaders. "I don't have any great hope that (improved relations) will happen."